2: Musters T-5 (1869-1870)1873
SH5 Tehuelche SH5

on his best horse, decorated with silver ornaments—if he possesses any—proceeds to the toldo of his intended, and hands over the gifts. The parents of the bride then return gifts of an equal value, which, however, in the event of a separation (a rare event), become the property of the bride. After this the bride is escorted by the bridegroom to his toldo, amidst the cheers of his friends and the singing of the women. Mares are usually then slaughtered and eaten on the spot, great care being taken that the dogs do not touch any of the meat or offal, as it is considered unlucky. The head, backbone, tail, together with the heart and liver, are taken up to the top of a neighbouring hill, as an offering to the Gualichu, or evil spirit. An Indian is allowed to have as many wives as he can support, but it is rare to find a man with more than two, and they generally only have one.

On the death of a Tehuelche all his horses, dogs, and other animals are killed, his ponchos, ornaments, bolas, and all other personal belongings are placed in a heap and burned, the widow and other womankind keeping up a dismal wailing, and crying out loud in the most melancholy manner. The meat of the horses is distributed amongst the relations on both sides; and the widow, who cuts her hair short in front and assumes black paint, repairs, bag and baggage, to the toldo of her relations, or if she has none in the party, to the toldo of the chief.

The body is sewn up in a mantle, poncho, or coat of mail, if the deceased possessed one, and is taken away by some of the relations and buried in a sitting posture, its face to the east, a cairn of stones being erected over the place, varying in size according to the wealth and influence of the deceased. I have never seen any of the graves described in Mr. Wood's work, but as my travels as a rule were confined to the interior, they may exist in some part of the sea-coast; nor did the exhumation and removal of the body ever come under my notice, and I should be inclined to doubt its being ever practised by the Tehuelches, inasmuch as it is a rule amongst

She is put into it and there the chanting becomes louder because

every available crone joins in and one of them attaches to a stick all the bells she can lay hold of and, making a great noise with them, she takes a turn around the outside of the tent every once in a while, those within redoubling their shouting when this occurs. During the time of the person's sickness mares and horses are slaughtered as an offering or sacrifice to the idol in order to bring about the sick one's recovery; but this offering is then eaten by the invalid and the chanters. 755 [534] [782]

If the invalid should die, either in the new poncho tent if she is a virgin, or in the home tent if it be a man or a married woman, the favorite horse is brought to the tent, is saddled and harnessed, and all the dead person's valuables are placed on it. A boy is then mounted on the horse and made to ride once around the tent in which the corpse is lying. The boy is then taken off the horse and a noose is placed over the horse's neck from the two ends of which two Indians pull until the horse is choked to death. A bonfire being already prepared, the horse's trappings and valuables are hurled into it and the person who heads the funeral proceedings starts to take off all his clothes and all else he has on and hurls them into the fire, and all the deceased's relatives and friends throw some article of clothing into the flames, either a garment which they have brought for the purpose from their tents or else they take off a garment on the spot, each competing with the others as to the value of the articles thrown into the fire, by which they demonstrate greater obligation to the deceased, or deeper friendship, etc. Then they disembowel the throttled horse and the meat is distributed amongst all those who have thrown garments into the fire. The bereaved remains in her tent, completely covered up and silent. All the women relatives and friends go to keep them [sic] company, and in order to do this they cut big locks of hair from their heads so that their hair hangs down over their foreheads up to their eyebrows; they claw their faces, scarify their cheeks, weep even if they do not really feel like doing so, and indulge in wailing and other expressions of sorrow so pitiable and heart-rending that it seems that their very hearts would break. The old crones take over the body at night and bury it where it seems best to them, the whereabouts of the burial place being withheld from the mourners and from all others, and if the old women are asked to reveal the place where the body has been laid they are not allowed to do so. The mourning goes on for fifteen days, with the same moaning, and every day horses belonging to the deceased are slaughtered until not one is left, as all his goods are to be destroyed and cannot be given away to anyone, and nobody would receive them anyway knowing that their owner was dead because this is a sacred matter [77] for them, and inviolable. 764 [765] 765 768 766

* [i.e., any sick virgin.--Author]